

men before you will look on this whole proposition purely on its merits and in the hope, which you have, no doubt, of getting the best possible railroad systems.

Mr. Bryan. I think the presumption that you ask is too large for the foundation that you lay for it. I do not think that on the statement of your own observation I should be asked to assume that there is no effort on the part of the railroads to influence congress. All that I ought to be asked to assume is that they have never exhibited in your presence or to your knowledge any evidence of that kind. I do not think that I could be asked to assume anything more on the statement of one man's experience.

Mr. Winslow. Well, would you want me to feel—I will not speak as to the others—that in spite of my statement you still think that one of the dangers of the situation is the private influence of the railroads over members of congress?

Mr. Bryan. Yes; I do. I would not want to accept the experience of one man as settling any question for the American people; certainly not where there is so much evidence on the other side, running over so long a period.

Mr. Winslow. And you still hold that one of the dangers attending private ownership is that congress can be manipulated by the railroads?

Mr. Bryan. I certainly did so contend, and I would still contend even if there were 15 members (referring to the committee) like you who did not know or had not been able to find any such influence.

Mr. Winslow. Are you opposed to lobbying in all its forms?

Mr. Bryan. Yes.

Mr. Winslow. Were you opposed to the lobbying that took place in the interest of prohibition?

Mr. Bryan. I am opposed to it for the same reason, if it is the same kind of a lobby that I have spoken of in reference to the railroads.

Mr. Winslow. And would you feel that the lobby for prohibition was unpaid and unselfish in respect to the monetary returns?

Mr. Bryan. I would say that there are two respects in which the prohibitionist who lobbies differs from the railroad lobbyist. The first is that he is advocating a thing in which he has no personal interest.

Mr. Winslow. He ought to have.

Mr. Bryan. The second is that his methods are public. He goes before the committees and states his position, makes his argument. I have no objection to a railroad president or a railroad attorney going before a committee and presenting anything he wants to, but I do object to a lobbyist keeping a pass book in the corridors of the capitol and trying to corrupt members.

Mr. Winslow. Yes; but there has been no hesitation on the part of the prohibition lobby and the lobby for woman's suffrage in telling members that if they do not vote their way they will be crucified at the polls. Now, there is another aspect of lobbying that has its effect.

Mr. Bryan. My observation is that such a threat does not disturb a congressman unless he knows that he has, in his district, people who will vote against him if he votes against their wishes.

Mr. Winslow. You would not give him credit for having manhood enough to have opinion of his own?

Mr. Bryan. My opinion is that a man ought to represent his constituents and if he cannot represent them, he ought to resign and let some one else take his place who can.

Mr. Winslow. In all cases?

Mr. Bryan. In all cases; and I would like to go further. I would like to see a law passed that would fix the same criminal punishment for a public official who embezzles power that is now enforced against the individual who embezzles money.

Mr. Winslow. Do you think it is right for cabinet officers to put men on the government pay roll and then send them out through the country for the development of special interests?

Mr. Bryan. A hypothetical question is never allowed by a court unless it contains all the essential elements of the thing to be considered, and I do not think that contains all the essential elements.

Mr. Winslow. I do not know that I know all the elements.

Mr. Bryan. Then you had better not speculate.

Mr. Winslow. I am not sure that you have not speculated and romanced in your plans.

Let me ask you this: What would you do with the railroad commission and its power? I mean the Interstate Commerce Commission?

Mr. Bryan. It would be very difficult for one to answer that question until after the law is passed, for a law is seldom the opinion of any one person. It is the composite opinion of all those who act, and until the law is passed it would be impossible to say whether the commission would still be needed. It might be that the commission would be the proper authority to put in charge of the management of the roads. It might be that it would be well to have an appeal from the management to this board. I would not be able to answer what we ought to do with it until I knew all the provisions of the law.

Mr. Winslow. Would you feel that congress could enact a law to cover the present situation without pretty well defining and determining and reforming the work of the Interstate Commerce Commission in respect of the railroad proposition?

Mr. Bryan. Well, you mean in respect to the present situation?

Mr. Winslow. Getting the railroads out of the hands of federal control into some other control.

Mr. Bryan. I am glad you ask the question.

If I were a member of congress, my plan would be this: To appoint at this session, and as soon as possible, a joint commission of senators and members to formulate a plan for a trunk-line system, giving the route that would be the most desirable and the approximate cost. I think the first step toward considering this plan as a practical plan, would be to have a committee go over it and formulate it and bring it in as a complete proposition. I only present it as an idea that

would have to be embodied in a bill before it would be fairly decided.

Mr. Winslow. Taking the railroads as we find them today, what would you do with them from now on to get them somehow into a trunk line, as you described it, and what would you do with the rest of them?

Mr. Bryan. I think that, if we proceeded at once to investigate the feasibility of the trunk-line system, it could be done in so short a time that we could retain control and operation by the government until the plan was reported back and acted upon; and when that was acted upon, then the other roads could be turned back into private hands.

Mr. Winslow. Did you not just say that you could go on and leave them stranded?

Mr. Bryan. I would not want to answer that question just as you put it.

Mr. Winslow. In the meantime suppose the states did not buy up these roads, what would happen to the struggling roads which were of small account compared to the others.

Mr. Bryan. I think you could trust the states to deal fairly with the roads within their borders.

Mr. Winslow. Of course that is all in the air, that proposition; there is nothing definite about it.

Mr. Bryan. Well, no more so than everything is in the air until it is brought to the earth.

Mr. Winslow. Well, that is a good answer, but I do not think we could build a railroad that way.

[The balance of Mr. Bryan's statement will be printed in the November issue.—Ed.]

JOHNNY AT THE RAT HOLE

